

# critical digest

Vol. III No. 3

September 18, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

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## N.Y. Openings This Week

Daphne Laureola-Music Box, 9/18/50. Dame Edith Evans and Cecil Parker star in James Birdie's new comedy with an all English cast. Produced by Leland Hayward and Herman Shumlin in association with Laurence Olivier. Directed by Murray MacDonald.

## Critics Look At New Season

Diverse viewpoints expressed by critics anticipating the new season. Barnes, Herald Tribune, welcomed back many veteran playwrights, English and American, to the Broadway stage. He is also happy to note that the "silly season" is a thing of the past. Hawkins, World-Telegram & Sun, finds an advantage in the ever increasing number of theatres. This insures better plays, because the weak ones will never be seen on Broadway. Pollock, Compass, sees a disadvantage in producing new plays in bunches instead of spacing them out. The week play might have a chance to run in the former instance, but it will suffer in comparison to the better plays when many open in a short period. Time critic sees happy prospects if producers stop worrying about money problems and the growing threat of TV. Morrison, Variety, expects big legitimate theatre grosses, both in New York and on the road.

## Show That Closed

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50-9/16/50. Joshua Logan's free style adaptation of Chkhov's "The Cherry Orchard" starring Helen Hayes received 15 "pros" from the 30 critics rated. Most were personal salutes to the star. Critics objected to transformation of classic Russian play to American South.

## Press Agents Report on Theatre

American Theatrical Press Agents and Managers Association filed a 33 page report on how they could encourage legitimate theatre in the nation. Suggestions included nation-wide publicity and advertising campaigns in all medias, educational aids for high schools and colleges, out of town ticket services, cooperation on direct mail lists. Plan was presented to League of N.Y. Theatres...Hi Phillips, WT&S, got right in the mood and offered his own ideas. They included banning of the world "publicist" in place of "press agent", slogans like "This Is National Smile At The Box Office Month", and radio commercials selling GBS plays as "Sharpest edges ever honed"...Wahls, News, offered a free jingle for the cause. "Save the drama; that's our chore. Try to prove TV's a bore. Thrice the cost of a movie, too -- Is legit drama the thing for you?"

## Machine That Predicts Hits Panned

Two critics urge producers and theatre lovers to ignore the gadget perfected by Dr. Norman Meier of University of Iowa. Dr. Meier told an AP science reporter that producers should rush scripts to his office. He would test the interest reactions of students on his machine, thus picking out the most interesting and dull spots of a given script. Chapman, News, panned idea because he gets too much enjoyment out of seeing one good actor in a bad play, or one good scene of a poor musical. Watts, Post, doubts if anyone can measure genius on a slide rule.

## News & Notes

Robert Garland, Journal American, leaving hospital...Willi Priory, former assistant to Ward Morehouse may have own TV series...Wolcott Gibbs accompanied cast of Season in the Sun to Boston for tryout.

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' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '  
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. NY Times                | 11. Newark News         | 21. Catholic World  |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune       | 12. Women's Wear Daily  | 22. Commonweal      |
| 3. NY News                 | 13. Daily Worker        | 23. Cue             |
| 4. NY Mirror               | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (FM, Star)   | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post                 | 16. George Jean Nathan  | 26. Newsweek        |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse)      | 17. Morning Telegraph   | 27. Time            |
| 8. NY Journal American     | 18. Variety             | 28. Nation          |
| 9. NY World-Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard           | 29. New Republic    |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle         | 20. Theatre Arts        | 30. New Yorker      |

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 2-9-13-14-22-25-29.  
So-So: 16-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 23. So-So: 6-29.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfield, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28.  
So-So: 16-19-22-23-27. None: 25.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.  
None: 13.

Kiss Me, Kate-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 16.  
So-So: 2-22-30.

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 4-5-6-8-10-11-15-17-19-23. Con: 1-2-12-16-20-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18. None: 7-9-13-21-22-24-25.

Peter Pan-St. James, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.  
None: 28.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.  
None: 5-10-11-13-14-16-22-28-29.

Tickets Please!-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 11-16-27-30. So-So: 26  
None: 7-18-25-28.

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' Green Room Department '  
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GBS MISCELLANY...Accident by Shaw evoked News editorial designed to prove that socialism and socialized medicine was a complete failure. GBS' demanding of private room at hospital was direct kick in teeth for Karl Marx...Fantastic scheme dreamed up by two New Yorkers revealed by Bronson, Variety. Plan would have had Shaw make his valedictory or good bye to the world on film. Fifteen minute short would be filed away, while would-be sponsors were lined up. Picture would be released on day of Shaw's death. Answer was "no."...Meanwhile Fox Films are reissuing shorts made of GBS 20 years ago, when producers feared he was going to die at age 74.

ADD NATHAN LEGEND...George Jean Nathan silenced a would-be admirer at the Stork Club. Fan broke into critic's conversation exclaiming "I've always looked forward to meeting you and shaking your hand." Comeback was "Don't give up hope -- maybe some day you will." repeats Sobol, Journal American.

PICKING REVIVALS...Wetts, Post, admits he never makes any claims as a constructive critic. In a Monday morning quarterback session he told the Festival Theatre what he thinks they should have produced. Recent revivals by Off Broadway groups that he enjoyed seeing include Measure for Measure, Sound of Hunting, Lucky Sam McCarver and The Racket...Post's Inquiring Photographer received suggestions on revivals. Brigadoon, Irene, Green Pastures, Janie and Finian's Rainbow were among the choices.

SOUTH AMERICAN LEGIT...Buenos Aires boasts 20 stage plays reports Morehouse, WT&S, just returned from a tour of Latin America. Rain and Death of a Salesman are currently being shown...Lima, Peru, Little Theatre group presented stirring production of Born Yesterday with Wendy Phillip, ex-Rockette, in the lead... Morehouse is convinced that subscription tour of key cities could easily be arranged by Helen Hayes, Katharine Cornell or Lunt and Fontanne, while Oklahoma would be an immediate hit.

TERRE HAUTE TO N.Y...Indiana State Teachers College Drama Group's annual pilgrimage to Broadway was noted by New Yorker's Talk of Town column. Group of 50 from Terre Haute gets college credit for attending plays, broadcasts and luncheons with top stars. Eddie Dowling complained, at meeting covered, of his difficulties last season with the millionaires of Houston.

STARS HOW LONG???...Wahls, News, asks a \$64 question. How long are stars expected to remain in hit shows? With rising production costs the time necessary to put a show in the black has been increased from 100 to over 300 performances, in many cases. Topic was brought to mind with closing of Where's Charley? due to Bolger's illness. Theatre Guild, which is producing Carousel and Oklahoma with unknowns may have the solution.

"SLICK" AUTHOR DEAD...Walter Ben Hare, author of Aaron Slick of Punkin Crick, died at age 70 in Arizona. Coleman, Mirror, set down some of the amazing figures. One million copies of the play sold; 28,000 performances listed. Hare wrote more than 200 comedies. Life recently billed his most famous, which was written in 1919, as "America's best loved comedy."

HOPE LEFT...roadway will never die, insists Walker, News, who reprinted his 1937 article which began his syndicated "Broadway" column. The reason is that the NY entertainment scene is unpredictable, no one can tell when the great play or new star will be born.

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' Off Broadway '

First Off Broadway play of season was panned by five critics, praised by three. Studio Seven's production of Pirandello's Naked at the Provincetown didn't meet with general favor. The author was mostly to blame. Atkinson, Times, said it was so poorly written that no actor could do much for it today. He did think sets and costumes were ingenious. Pollock, Compass, Hawkins, WT&S and McDonald, Billboard, admitted the play might be slightly confusing, but they still enjoyed it. McDonald recommended play for theatre and classic lovers, not the general public. They thought cast did fine ensemble job. Anne Shropshire, Mercedes Shirley, Phillip Saville and Bernard Kates headed cast directed by Frank Corsaro, settings were by Robert Thayer. Studio Seven's hit last season was Strindberg's The Father.

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' Interview Round Up '

GARSON KANIN...Born Yesterday author and adapter of forthcoming The Amazing Adele considers the most important time of his life the four years spent in the George Abbott office, he told WNBC Hi Jinx. Hardly a day passes when he doesn't use something he learned there.

SIDNEY KINGSLEY...Detective Story author and adapter of Darkness at Noon is trying a new technique he revealed to Morehouse, WT&S. It will be the experiment of oscillation in time as well as space. He hopes to show the past, present and future almost simultaneously while the present reality goes on. This is hardest job as a playwright.

JUANITA HALL...Bloody Mary in South Pacific plans a "Blues Concert" if her current hit ever closes she told WABC Eloise McElhone. Rodgers and Hammerstein heard her auditioning and signed her on the spot. After hearing her in ANTA's Talent 1948.

ROBERT WHITEHEAD...Co-producer of Member of the Wedding stressed closer cooperation in every department of the theatre to Theatre News Weekly. With cooperation and concessions the theatre is apt to expend eventually. Major fault with current theatre is overdose of commercialism. He also voiced this idea in article in Sunday Times.

JOSE FERRAR...Star of Cyrano de Bergerac, stage and film versions, doubts if actors are unlike people. He told ABC Welcom Travelers that his interests are the same as the average man. He likes tennis, swimming and cooking. He is now on tour lecturing on Stanley Kramer movie.

GLORIA SAFIER...Theatrical agent follows advice of Myron Selznick who told her "Protect your client. He is the only person who counts." she told Rice, Post. Starting as secretary to Billy Rose's press agent, she later became press agent herself. The agency she started on a shoestring two years ago is now on paying basis, but she wants to keep it a small business. Her top client is Margaret Phillips.

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' Chit Chat '

ROSEMARY PRIZ...Nineteen year old winner of free lunch for year at Gilmore. She was chosen as "most promising actress in summer stock"...Paula Lawrence's wire caricatures will be exhibited at Albright Gallery, Buffalo...Hillman Foundation prizes include \$500 for best play on trade union development...Theatre tickets are available at Sardi's...Disc jockey Art Ford planning "TV Board of View" program would feature panel discussing films and plays.



